

CLAIMS

1. A method of printing a document in an information technology network comprising at least one computer and at least one printer, the method comprising the steps of:
 - dispatching first source data having a first printing priority to at least one printer for performance of at least one print process;
 - subsequent to dispatch of the first source data and prior to completion of the at least one print process, dispatching second source data having a second printing priority to the at least one printer for performance of at least one print process;
 - determining whether the second priority is higher than the first priority;
 - if the second priority is higher than the first priority, interrupting the at least one print process on the first source data, and performing one of:
 - (i) storing any processed first source data on long-term storage within the network;
 - (ii) deleting any processed first source data from any ephemeral storage of the at least one printer to which first source data was dispatched without storing such processed first source data on long term storage within the network;
 - and;
 - returning a message to a print manager to that effect.
2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising the step, prior to the step of either storing or deleting any processed first source data, of determining how much long-term storage space is available in the network.
3. A method according to claim 2 further comprising the step of determining whether the available long term storage space is sufficient to enable storage of any processed first source data and subsequent performance of the at least one print process on the second source data.
4. A method according to claim 3 wherein any processed first source data is stored on long-term storage of at least one printer of the network in the event that the available storage space is sufficient, and any processed first source data is deleted

from any ephemeral storage of the at least one printer to which first source data was dispatched without storing such processed data on long term storage in the event that the available storage space is not sufficient.

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of determining whether the second priority is higher than the first priority is determined in advance of dispatching the second source data to the at least one printer.

6. A method according to claim 5 further comprising the step, in the event that the second priority is higher than the first priority, of dispatching to the at least one printer a command instructing the at least one printer to interrupt the at least one print process on first source data, and either to save any processed first source data, or to delete such processed first source data.

7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of determining whether the second priority is higher than the first priority is determined at the at least one printer subsequent to receipt of the second source data.

8. A method according to claim 7 further comprising the step, performed within the at least one printer in the event that the second priority is higher than the first priority, of automatically executing a command instructing the at least one printer to interrupt the at least one print process on first source data, and either to save any processed first source data, or to delete such processed first source data.

9. A method according to claim 1 wherein any processed first source data is stored on long term storage provided by a plurality of printers within the network.

10. A method according to claim 1 wherein first and second source data is distributed between a plurality of printers for performance of the at least one print process, and the at least one print process includes ripping of first and second source data.

11. A method according to claim 10 wherein the first and second source data are each dispatched initially to a single printer, and are subsequently distributed between a plurality of printers.

12. A method according to claim 10, wherein the first and second source data is distributed between first and second pluralities of printers respectively for performance of the at least one print process, and wherein the first and second pluralities of printers have at least one printer in common.
13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the second priority is higher than the first priority, and the method further comprises the steps, prior to dispatch of the second source data, of estimating which printers involved in performing the at least one print process on the first source data will have long term storage available after storage of any processed first source data upon interruption of the at least one print process on the first source data, and dispatching at least part of the second source data to at least one printer thus identified.
14. A method according to claim 1 wherein the print process may be a computational print process, or a print process in which data is passed through print ops. of a printer to place indicia on a medium and thereby produce a document.
15. A printer comprising: a print operations function including a print engine and feed and finishing capability, a processor, at least one data storage medium, and at least one network port to enable connection of the printer to elements of an information technology network, wherein the processor is adapted, upon receipt of an appropriate signal, to suspend a print process taking place within the printer and to perform one of the following operations:
- (i) save any data output by the print process upon suspension thereof on long term storage;
 - (ii) delete from ephemeral storage any such output data without saving such output data on long term storage.
16. A printer according to claim 15 wherein the processor is adapted to run a program which: determines a priority assigned to incoming data entering the printer via the at least one network port for a first type of print processing; determines whether the priority assigned to the incoming data is higher than a priority assigned to current data undergoing the first type of print processing; and automatically executes

a suspension function in the event that the incoming data has a higher priority than the current data.

17. A printer according to claim 15 wherein the processor is adapted to execute the
5 suspension function upon receipt of a corresponding command via the network port.

18. A printer according to claim 15 wherein the long-term storage is within the network.

- 10 19. A printer according to claim 19 wherein the long-term storage is the at least one data storage medium.

20. A method of printing a document comprising at least one computer and at least one printer, the method comprising the steps of:

- 15 dispatching first source data having a first printing priority to at least one printer for performance of at least one print process;

subsequent to dispatch of the first source data and prior to completion of the at least one print process, dispatching second source data having a second printing priority to the at least one printer for performance of at least one print process;

- 20 determining whether the second priority is higher than the first priority;

if the second priority is higher than the first priority, interrupting the at least one print process on the first source data, and performing one of:

- (i) storing any processed first source data on long-term storage;
(ii) deleting any processed first source data from any ephemeral
25 storage of the at least one printer to which first source data was dispatched without storing such processed first source data on long term storage; and
returning a message to a print manager.